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KERRANG!

"VIOLENCE HAS NEVER CREATED ANYTHING POSITIVE..."

MARILYN MANSON

LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

COVER STORY

SUMMER OF HATE

The world's greatest festival is back – yes, it's time for our annual pilgrimage to Donington Park for DOWNLOAD 2018. With the summer's finest billing coming to the spiritual home of rock, it promises to be a weekend never to forget – and that's before we even consider what one particular hellraiser has in store. MARILYN MANSON kicks off our essential guide to the weekend ahead, in one of his most illuminating interviews ever…

WORDS: MATT ALLEN **PHOTOS:** PEROU

MOM
MANSON
15

Manson's audition for the role of the Mad Hatter was... scary

"Balls deep."

In a voice dripping with equal dollops of sleaze and menace, Marilyn Manson unveils his anarchic plans for his highly anticipated Download Festival appearance, a merry brand of hell-making sandwiched between Ozzy Osbourne and Shinedown on a grandstanding Sunday night finale. "I'm coming in balls *deep*," he says again, laughing darkly. "Tip, then shaft, then balls. I think we just loaded up a gas tank full of gasoline and I'm about to light it at Download."

The God Of Fuck, a one-time international hate magnet and stilt-striding, art-metal disasterpiece, is chatting to Kerrang! in his Hollywood Hills lair. A viewing of Woody Harrelson's shot-in-one-take movie, Lost In London, has been the highlight of his Friday evening so far. It's midnight, though, we've yet to light up, and Manson is in the mood to make mischief on the eve of his return to Download, a festival he's already graced four times during a career spanning nearly 25 years, 10 studio albums and a ticker tape parade of lawsuits. Some of these brushes with authority have even taken place onstage, most notably when he rubbed his aforementioned "tip, shaft and balls" against the head of a security guard during a 2001 show in Detroit.

These incidents, he reckons, can barely be considered shocking. Manson believes his most provocative highlights have taken place during flashpoints with authority. "When they told me that I couldn't do something and I did it, and proved them wrong," he says. "Like when I've had podiums and banners onstage. [One featured a red circle symbol with a black lightning bolt cut through the middle, which was admittedly similar to an SS logo.] It wasn't meant to be a massive statement. It was supposed to be a commentary on fascism and religion in rock'n'roll. If anyone missed that point, I'm sorry. In Germany, they said, 'You can't do that.' And I said, 'Well, don't act like a Nazi, then.'

"Artistically, everything I've tried to do has been to make people excited and to think about different ideas. There's never been anything to shock. I can't shock myself. Well, unless I use a Taser gun. But that doesn't work very well, by the way..."

You've tried?

"Yes, I have. I have a Taser Wand. It works on other people, but it doesn't work on me. You know, it's not a matter of trying to stay shocking, trying to be provocative, trying to be relevant, it's about making shit happen. My job is to make music, and to look as handsome as I can while doing it."

All of which bodes well for this year's Download, a show in which Manson promises to bring "massive chaos; *proper* chaos" and a set list "that makes people excited", plus one or two new songs, including his recent cover of Cry Little Sister, which was first recorded by Gerard McMann for the 1987 film The Lost Boys before being updated by Manson for the forthcoming X-Men movie, The New Mutants. There's also the small matter of Manson's leg, which was snapped in two places when a giant, revolver-shaped prop collapsed on him during an "excruciating" freak accident onstage in New York last year. He has spent the last six months resting and recuperating while sucking on "the herb called marijuana. Which is unusual because it's a gateway drug. I went to the back gate. I started strong and went backwards.

"But as I couldn't walk, I had to focus on writing. We've started making a new record, but it's to be determined as far as who's involved in it. This pain is a different inspiration. I've been writing a lot of music and painting a lot – that's been some of the upsides to the downsides of having a broken leg. I don't have any reason to be miserable, though. There's no reason for me to have any complaints in life, other than the ones I can fix myself, and that's what I've been doing."

Manson certainly arrives at the summer's most exciting line-up with his anarchic reputation intact. Recent reports suggested he was barred from California's too-cool-for-school desert party, Coachella. "The guy who owns the land was a Christian man," says Manson. "He said, 'There's a no-play list, such as Marilyn Manson.'" Meanwhile, in a public confessional, the singer has admitted to once pissing on the backstage catering meant for "true brother" Jonathan Davis of Korn, who also appears at Download on the festival's opening Friday, and will no doubt be bringing his own closely guarded sandwiches with him this weekend.

"I wasn't *intentionally* trying to pee on his catering," says Manson. "But yet I was. I did it because his bass player, Fieldy, was very rude at the time, I don't know how he is now. I didn't piss on *all* the catering, I just pissed on... all of it. It wasn't anything Jonathan was going to eat. I don't even think it was open, it had plastic over it.

"One time, I almost convinced Jonathan to quit Korn and be my guitar player," he continues. "He was staying with me in my shitty, squalid apartment in New Orleans when I made [1995 album] Smells Like Children. He was in the room when I recorded Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This). It was that one time we did meth. Well, I think. I don't know. Breaking Bad, it's not really clear. But Jonathan and I became tight and I did beat him with a belt – not the belt, the metal part. So if I run into him at the festival, it'll be fun."

There are other people Manson hopes to see during his return to Donington Park this week: Guns N' Roses for one. "They've always been cool to me," he says. "I saw them in Florida with Mötley Crüe on the Shout At The Devil tour. It was great and inspiring." Ozzy Osbourne for another: "I haven't seen him in a few years, but he and I got to be really close on Ozzfest, to the point where he's been very kind to me. You can't fuck with Ozzy." Then, of course, there is the Download crowd, some of whom Manson knows will be hardcore acolytes, others in attendance to simply gawp and point at the freak show.

"I'm bringing some things to England that I've not done recently," he says, mysteriously. "I think that you'll appreciate them. That's not me hyping it, or leaving you in suspense, but you're in suspense now, aren't you? Anyway,

...And his audition for Beetlejuice wasn't much better

"I'M GOING TO BRING MASSIVE CHAOS TO DOWNLOAD"

MARILYN MANSON

the broken leg gave me a chance to evaluate and remind myself of everything. I've always made a promise to never go above my basic means, because I can get in a van and play a rock concert and enjoy it. That's not saying I don't want to succeed more, or to make better music, there's just no reason to stop being essentially white trash – which is where I'm from in Ohio.

"I never left the gravel driveway."

From that idyllic vision of "white trash" domesticity, one image has stuck with Marilyn Manson. A picture shot by the French photographer, Marc Riboud, during one of the American anti-Vietnam war protests in 1967, which famously depicted 17-year-old Jan Rose Kasmir clutching a flower as US National Guardsmen faced down a crowd of protesters. The singer had yet to be born, but his father, who passed away last year, had served in Vietnam. And when the 'Flower Power' protests later extended to the bombing of Cambodia in 1970, another march took place at Kent State University on May 4. As a peaceful gathering turned grotesque, four people were shot dead by the Ohio National Guard. "Right where I grew up," says Manson, sadly.

Onstage in 1999, and suffering from a Sharpie that ran out too soon

GETTY

Soldiers in the Vietnam War later placed flowers into their rifle muzzles, though Manson's reclamation of this iconic image for this Kerrang! photoshoot (which took place in 2017) has been updated amid tragic circumstances – another spate of high school shootings across America this year. As of May 25, the day on which Kerrang! speaks to Manson – and only the 21st week of the calendar – there have already been some 23 school shootings in 2018. Though there is one incident that still chills him more than any other: Columbine, the 1999 massacre, in which 12 students and one teacher were killed by senior students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, who then took their own lives. In the shock that followed, Manson's music was made a convenient public scapegoat, with the shooters said to have "worshipped" his albums; the mass murder that lurks in the shadows of his conversation tonight.

Talking to Manson is always an engaging experience, though one not too dissimilar to herding cats. He veers away at wild, but entertaining tangents – Kurt Cobain ("the one person I regret I never got to meet"), his squabble with Cradle Of Filth's Dani Filth ("it was stupid"), and extreme metal rhythms ("don't make beats that confuse strippers") – before descending into darkened rabbit holes. The recurring point throughout is arguably the bleakest episode of his career. As we talk, Columbine and his unwanted link to violence, one he says is regularly misrepresented, is a subject he returns to on multiple occasions. Even the football shirt he wears on the cover of this magazine carries echoes from that awful day in 1999.

"It's a jersey that a young kid who went to Columbine made for me," he says. "He was there in the time when it happened. He made it for me as a gesture saying, 'I don't feel like you deserve to be blamed for it because it wasn't your fault.' It was a great gesture. I was only a year old [when the Kent State massacre in 1970] happened, and I almost went to college there, but it was always a symbolic image that I grew up seeing. Maybe it was embedded in my head.

"THIS JERSEY WAS GIVEN TO ME BY A KID FROM COLUMBINE"

MARILYN MANSON

"It's strange that a lot of people don't remember the impact of Columbine and the effect it had on the world. People, politicians, were throwing blame on artists. It wasn't something that I did, it was something someone else did and you can blame whoever you want. I didn't personally do anything to cause it." He later explains, "I would never ask anyone or encourage anyone to do something as stupid as [causing violence], because it's not a smart idea. I don't think violence creates anything positive."

There have been times, though, when Manson has sailed perilously close to the wind. In November 2017, while performing at Ozzfest Meets Knotfest in San Bernadino, California, the singer aimed a fake machine gun at the crowd. The incident took place only hours after 26 people had been killed at a church shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas. "That was an untimely event," he says. "Unfortunately I'd already planned to have that and it just so happened that it was right when something else happened. And how can someone predict what's going to happen?" He's eager to stress how, "World War One, World War Two, Vietnam, it's sort of ingrained into your thinking that violence is the ultimate solution for solving any problem, based on wars, and it's not."

Instead, isolation and ignorance are our biggest problems, and Manson claims we're currently living in an internet era set "somewhere between George Orwell's 1984 and [the Ray Bradbury book] Fahrenheit 451", dystopian novels where surveillance states and literary extinction loom large. "If you're always on your phone, checking it, and that's your whole life, it's almost a part of the decay of the entire civilisation." He argues we need to live in the moment more. "Just pay attention," he says. Though the catalysts for violence, particularly in teens, remain complicated.

"The reasons are not because of our music, so much as they are of people who don't understand it. That's not anything new; I'm not being a genius by saying that. It goes back to the beginning of where everything comes from. You can blame religion, but I'll go back to the basics, which is that people have issues, and when you feel uncomfortable about your issues, when you're being pressured into defining yourself, then you [can] get great things like punk rock, heavy metal – you get all of that.

"[Some] people tend to lash out in ways that are completely illogical to most of society. They have issues that we really can't understand, because we're not psychiatrists or psychologists. We might read books and we might have theories, but [the reason for violence is] troubled people. I think the trouble is [them] not having a control of their life, where people feel as though they're drowning because the world seems overwhelming, and that might change… I really think art is an important part of fixing it, not politics, not regulations, not psychiatry, not pharmaceuticals. It should be about

Despite having his own shirt, Manson was last to be picked again

INSIDE MANSON'S RECORD COLLECTION

A brief history of the Antichrist Superstar's love affair with music...

"I used to buy records from a store which I think was secretly a pot store, way before pot stores existed, because the logo had a pot leaf around it. I was in a Christian school and I just started veering from listening to **Judas Priest**. I remember buying **Iron Maiden's Powerslave (1984)**. I was 14 and I bought **Mötley Crüe**'s **Shout At The Devil (1983)** and **Slayer's Live Undead (1984)**.

"My segue from metal was, I guess, 'alternative', but when people said alternative, I'd say, 'Alternative to what?' The first couple of records I heard that changed my opinion and formed what I would want to listen to would be **Ministry**'s single, **Stigmata**, from **The Land of Rape And Honey (1988),** which I ended up doing a cover of for the Atomic Blonde movie soundtrack. I almost felt like I was treading on something that was so sacred to me as a child.

"Then there was **The Cure's Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me (1987)** and **Jane's Addiction's Nothing's Shocking (1988)**. Those records melded me out of metal into a new version of what would become the future of music. They were very important records to me that I still listen to, and that led me to **Bauhaus** and **Joy Division**. I think there was a period where **Pantera** came along and that was sonically devastating and amazing.

"**Nirvana** was epically impactful on me. I wrote one of my first articles as a journalist about Nirvana, and the **Bleach (1989)** record. I remember buying a **Hole** cassette before I'd heard Nirvana and I loved the first record **(Pretty On The Inside, 1991)**. **Sonic Youth** and the whole Sub Pop scene was a great influence – bands like **Mudhoney** and **Tad** – even **White Zombie** and **Monster Magnet**. They were all albums I'd heard before performing in a band."

Manson returns to Download in 2015

FORGOTTEN HATE ANTHEMS

The Manson deep cuts we want brought back for Download...

SNAKE EYES AND SISSIES

PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN FAMILY (1994)

Not enough really early stuff in Manson's sets these days. And, yeah, you could have Lunchbox, but that doesn't have quite as filthy a riff as this. It's rougher around the edges than the more velvet-gloved material he'd later write, but for sheer nihilistic rock'n'roll thrust, this is an underrated cracker.

MISTER SUPERSTAR

ANTICHRIST SUPERSTAR (1996)

It's one of the key moments from Antichrist Superstar, so it's odd that this sneering, lusty bit of sleaze rarely makes it on to a set list. Not only does it have a killer, slinky riff, but *en masse* shouting of '*I'll kill you if I can't have you*' could only be loads of fun, right? And that's why we're all here...

1996

ANTICHRIST SUPERSTAR (1996)

Was it someone saying this banger's '*Anti-people, now you've gone too far*' line in an Alan Partridge voice to Manson's face, robbing it of its venom, that sent it off into retirement? Probably not, but he should play it if only so we can sing along in such a manner. A-ha!

THE LONG HARD ROAD OUT OF HELL

SPAWN OST (1997)

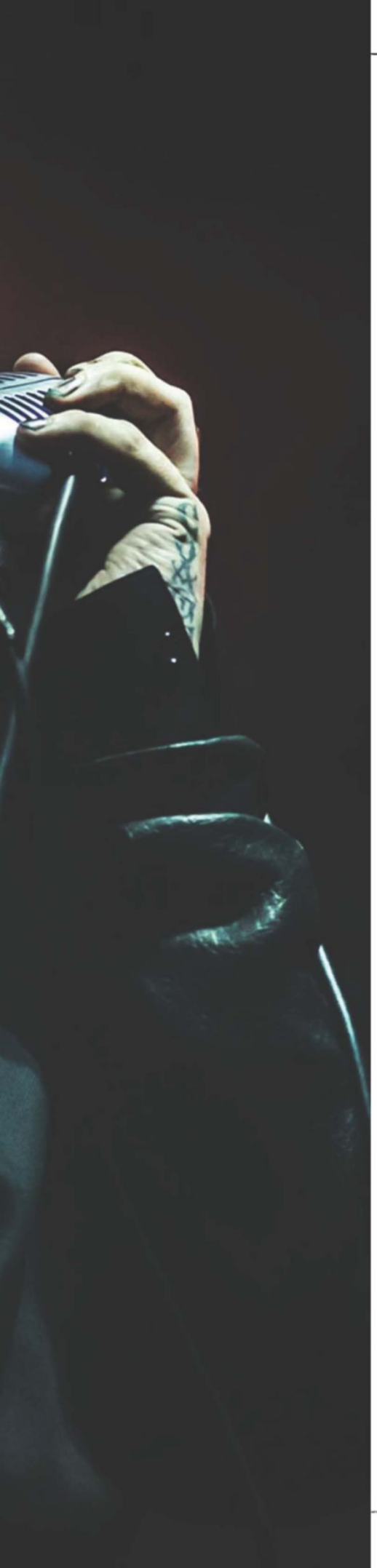
Do we mean the forgotten gem from the Spawn soundtrack, or Manson doing a reading from his lurid 1998 autobiography? Take your pick. If you plump for the latter, you'll get to hear him tell funny stories about vomit fights with Nine Inch Nails and going to a zoo on acid. LOL!

I DON'T LIKE THE DRUGS (BUT THE DRUGS LIKE ME)

MECHANICAL ANIMALS (1998)

You hadn't noticed Mazza had stopped playing this, had you? He's been doing a bit of it, the tease, but this Mechanical Animals highlight in its full, greased-up, hip-swinging glory hasn't been aired for years. Get some backing singers and bust it out!

GETTY



people feeling good about themselves in art. It's what makes me feel good – and I'm obviously bat-shit crazy, as far as everyone else says…"

Do you ever worry that some of the things you've said and done might make you a target?

"Of course. One of my great idols is John Lennon. Every time I walk out of the door, I'm not afraid, but at the same time I'm aware I've said and done things that could make people hate me, starting with [1996 LP] Antichrist Superstar. But I lived through it from 1996. I've had bomb and death threats. Then something I wasn't involved in, Columbine, shut my life down. I didn't complain about that, either – I just continued on. I tried to make art that was not even a response to it. It was just saying how I felt.

"I think that you have to – metaphorically and literally – move faster than other people. Just know that you can say something political, you can say something religious, you can say something controversial, but you have to be aware of the repercussions. Like I've always said, freedom of speech does not come with a dental plan or life insurance. I don't look for trouble, but trouble definitely follows me…"

> **"I DON'T LOOK FOR TROUBLE, BUT TROUBLE DEFINITELY FOLLOWS ME…"**
> MARILYN MANSON

Manson might argue otherwise, but his live shows and performance career have left a long and gory trail of shock and awe. At one of his earliest gigs, as detailed in his 1998 autobiography The Long Hard Road Out Of Hell, the singer infamously talked a "pregnant-looking" actress into ironing a Nazi flag onstage. She later performed a mock abortion on herself. This art statement amused Nine Inch Nails totem Trent Reznor so much that he later signed Manson to his Nothing Records label and released the band's debut album, Portrait Of An American Family, in 1994. "When you say that out loud, it *does* sound shocking to me," he chuckles.

In the beginning of his career, Marilyn Manson was simply an art project "in the spirit of Dalí and punk rock, and this idea of chaos". He wanted to grab people's attention. "The music suddenly became something that I had to create as a soundtrack for this vision; to string things up while trying to make a difference in a world that I was seeing going utterly downhill. I think that's where Trent and I bonded, because he was the same about it, and he was a great guiding hand at harnessing what my ideas were." Nearly 25 years on, and trailing the release of his 10th studio album, 2017's Heaven Upside Down, Manson's shows are now packed with people watching a similar brand of chaos unfold, though they're increasingly staring at their phones rather than the action onstage. "Sometimes people avoid their own life and it's feeding into a George Orwell scenario," he says.

It's always worth paying attention, though. Recently, Manson climbed on to a barrier at a European show only for a fan to bite him in the crotch. "They let go. I did not get rabies. I survived." Previously, during an early tour, shared with Korn and Danzig, the singer recalls how a gun was pointed at his head by security guards. The provocation? During a rowdy performance he encouraged the crowd to aim volleys of phlegm towards the stage. "The humorous thing was the spit would never reach me, but it would hit the security guards," he says.

"It was in New Jersey. When I walked off stage, they were waiting to beat my ass. Danzig had these Kendo sticks and he went full blown, he defended me. Danzig saved my fucking life. I went to the dressing room, but they tried to break in, and they all had guns. My tour manager had a gun too at the time, so it was a showdown, but I won. Then a guy who got spat on said he was going to get me prosecuted for getting them AIDS."

When it comes to experiencing artistic shock, the first record that ever unsettled Manson was Venom's 1985 thrash album, Possessed. "That scared me. I thought, 'This is really upsetting.'" When he bought Slayer's Live Undead, the cover depicting a band of zombies playing in a cemetery, the guitar chaos caused his mother to panic. "She wasn't very religious necessarily, but she got traumatised. She returned it, she thought it was satanic." One of the rare occasions he's been freaked out onstage was when somebody threw a "giant black scorpion" towards him. "It was latched to my chest and it was horrifying because I don't like scorpions. Not the band, the creatures.

"It was alive! The thing about the black scorpions, the ones with the big tail, is that they're not as dangerous as the small ones – the little yellow ones you'll find in California or Texas. The little ones don't know their strength, so they'll use too much venom, they'll harm you more. That could be a metaphor for our entire world: people don't understand what they're doing sometimes, whether it's instinctual or defensive, and what everyone should think about is that the world doesn't need more violence."

Instead, it needs more art, dark-hearted or otherwise. As a kid, Marilyn Manson's reaction to "drowning, feeling overwhelmed" was to twist his rage into music and malevolent performance. "I always encourage people to be themselves in an artistic way, not a destructive way," he says. "There's nothing constructive in doing any harm to yourself in general. That's coming from someone who's done that to himself."

His performance at Download will be an extension of that message: hard metal played amid massive chaos, *proper chaos*, balls out, with a little peace and love to match the sleaze and savagery, the guns and the roses.

Just don't bite him. **K!**

MARILYN MANSON PLAYS DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL THIS WEEKEND. OUR DOWNLOAD PREVIEW CONTINUES ON PAGE 38 WITH ALL THE WEEKEND'S TALKING POINTS PICKED APART, AND INFO ON ALL THE SETS YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS